

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BOMBAY

Bombay is known to all travellers in the Orient as the Gateway to the vast resources of the British Empire in the East. On an island, ten miles long by three miles wide, situated about six miles from the mainland of India, across the harbour but linked directly to it, on the north, by the island of Salsette, the importance of Bombay, both as a port and as a railway centre, needs no emphasis.

Growth of the Port

Vast progress has been made by each succeeding generation since Bombay became British in 1660. Originally consisting of seven islands, connected by low-lying land of which each generation in turn has reclaimed its large area from the sea, at the present day we have a thriving city of a million and a quarter inhabitants, comprising a population equal to that of Manchester and Liverpool together.

In recent years the cotton mills in the city, of which there are seventy-six, have increased the mill population by leaps and bounds. Much has been done by British enterprise in securing the steady improvement of Bombay. Each succeeding Governor has, in his turn, contributed to the really fine city of the present day.

A generation ago the business quarter, concentrated in the limited area of the Fort, had so considerably expanded that it became necessary to remove the old town walls and to construct on their site a broad boulevard which, to-day, forms one of the most important streets.

The broad expanse of open land, or "maidan," surrounding the walls was converted into a public open space, large sections of which still exist; the best-known portions being the Oval and the Cooperage. The original line of the foreshore in Back Bay was gradually pushed seawards; and the fine, tree-planted avenue known as Queen's Road was constructed, which still gives the best route out of Bombay.

So long ago as 1860, schemes for the reclamation of further areas were undertaken; and the result is seen both on the harbour side of the island and in the fine stretch of gardens and recreation spaces which exist along the sea front northwards of Marine Lines.

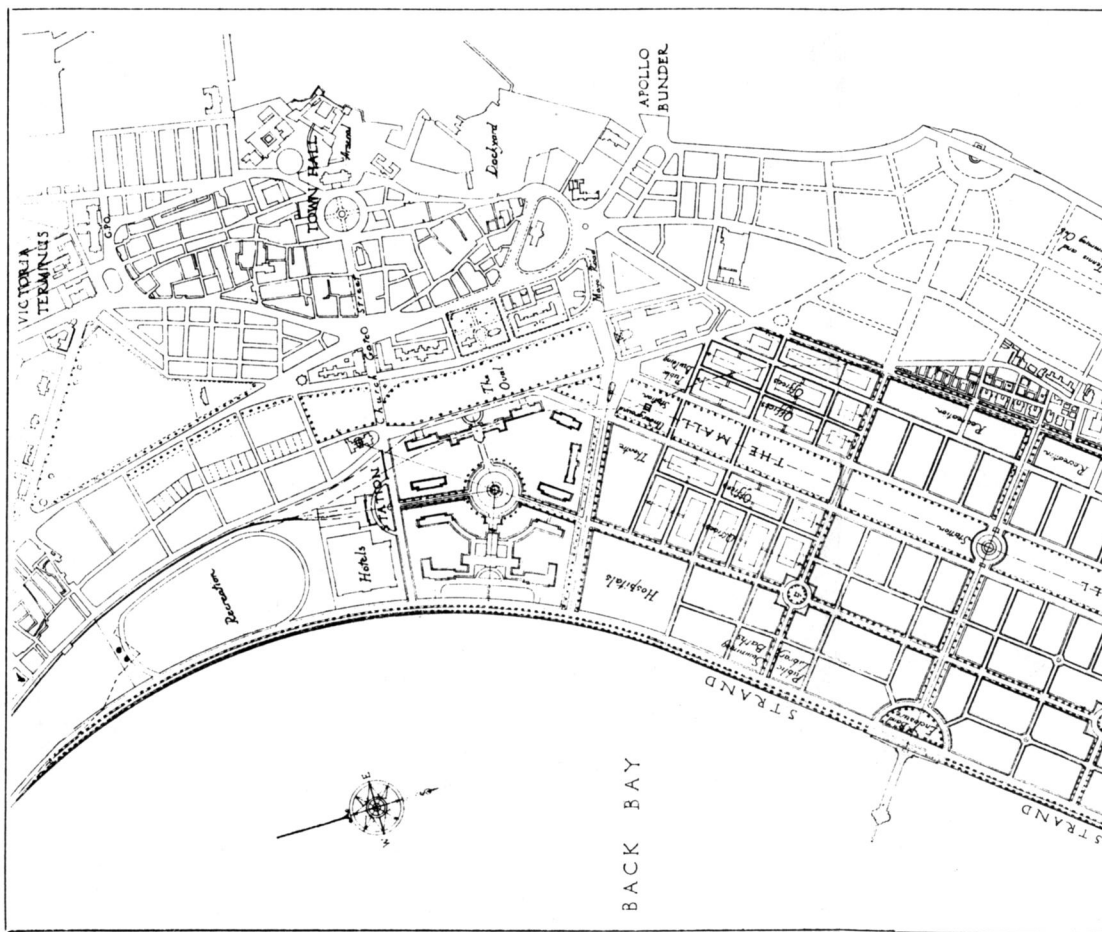
With the formation of the Bombay Port Trust considerable expansion was undertaken on the eastern side of the island fringing the harbour

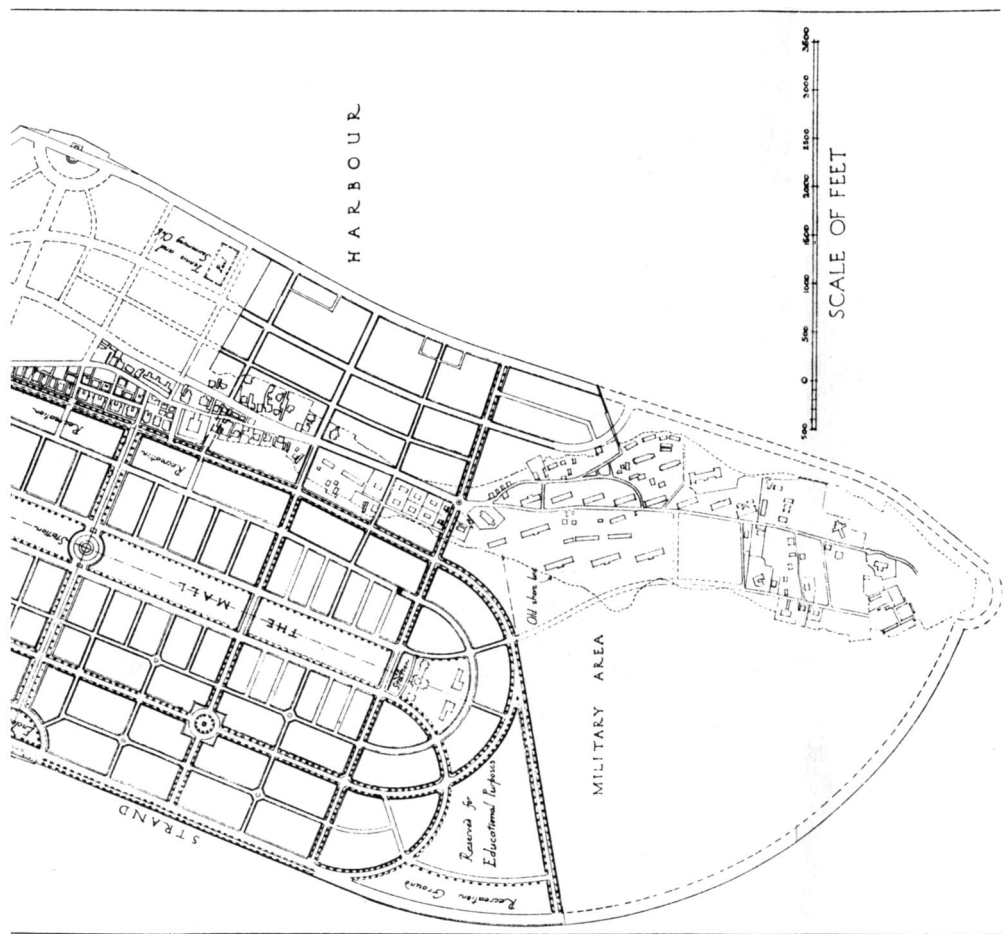
proper. The Cotton Green, which for a century has been at the extreme point of the island at Colaba, has now been removed to a new site at Sewri, midway up the eastern side of the island. Large warehouses have been erected here and, with the transference of the cotton trade to this point, much of the bullock wagon traffic, which at present crowds the narrow streets of the old city, will be removed and the eastern side of the island left free for industrial expansion.

The two railways which at present run into Bombay have also done much to secure the spread of the population outwards. The Great Indian Peninsula Railway is now completing an additional line, known as the Harbour Branch, which will afford new facilities for the eastern side of the island. The western side is served by the B.B. and C.I. Railway. Both lines are shortly to be electrified, and when this transformation has been effected more rapid transit to and from the suburbs will be achieved.

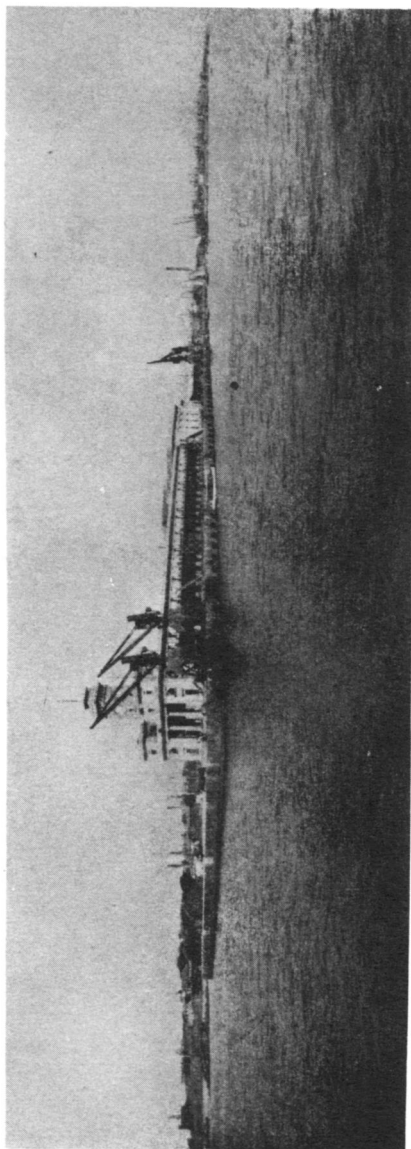
For many years there has been a steady upward tendency in land values, both in the island of Bombay and along the railway lines in the suburban areas—particularly in the vicinity of the railway stations. So great has been the speculation in the past and so certain have been the profits that the price of land has risen, even in suburban areas, from perhaps £100 per acre to £3,000 or £4,000 per acre ; and, in the centre of the city, land has reached prices in excess of those obtained in the City of London itself. The evils of land speculation have long been apparent and the intensive use of the land which it has brought about has, in its turn, forced up the price to even higher values. In the poorer parts of the native city the congestion, both of buildings and humanity, is indescribable ; and, in the absence of efficient bye-laws, there has been serious growth of overcrowded slums and unhealthy conditions which, in the past, have resulted in outbreaks of epidemics such as cholera and bubonic plague. The Municipal Council, has however, taken the matter firmly in hand ; and, with the stricter building regulations now in force, a repetition of these conditions is not likely to occur.

Side by side with the efforts of the Municipality the Bombay City Improvement Trust, founded in 1898, has secured a steady series of improvements throughout the city. New streets have been cut through the slum areas and, in the immediate outskirts, wide, new streets are being made which will form part of a great arterial road system for the whole island. Much of the damage had, however, been done ; and, in certain cases, the improvements have been kept back owing to the costly nature of the land to be acquired. Of recent years it has been the practice to acquire a much greater area than that required for the street itself, and in this way the increased value of the adjoining land has accrued to the public authority in the form of "betterment."

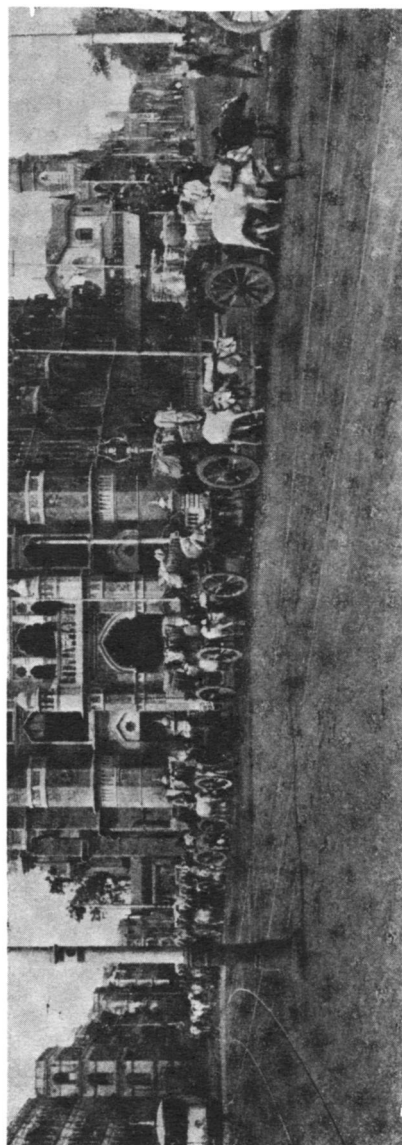




BOMBAY
Proposed Development



The last view seen over the stern of a P. & O. liner



Hotel Majestic, showing the traffic difficulties with bullock waggons
BOMBAY

In one particular case, that of Church Gate Street improvement, the municipality, in addition to securing the widening of the narrow street from 30 feet to 70 feet, has also obtained a net profit of nearly £200,000.

The magnitude of the problem and the necessity for raising large financial loans in the open market has necessitated the problem being dealt with on an even larger scale than ever before. Under the enthusiastic leadership of the Governor, Sir George Lloyd, ably seconded by Sir Lawless Hepper as Director of Development, a great scheme of public work is being undertaken, extending far beyond the limits of Bombay Island to which the efforts of the Municipality and the Improvement Trust have, perforce, been limited. No further factories are to be erected within the island; the noxious trades, such as tanneries and slaughter-houses and the like, are being removed to a special area outside the city, on the north side of Bombay, and an industrial township will be established there with a garden village, for the workers, at Chembur.

Another industrial area is being set aside at Kurla-Kirol; but the largest undertaking of this description will probably be the industrial community now being established at Ambernath, adjoining the G.I.P. Railway, on the mainland some forty miles north of Bombay. This will eventually form an industrial garden city, or satellite town, to which the larger undertakings can be removed as opportunities occur. As with all new townships there have been difficulties as to water supply and power undertakings, but these are now being overcome. The construction of new water works is in hand and electric power is being obtained from the hydro-electric installations of Messrs. Tata & Co. Two large factories have already been erected and others are about to be undertaken.

Back Bay Reclamation

To provide for the pressing need for further accommodation in the business centre of the city, and immediately adjacent to the commercial enterprises in the Fort, a large scheme of reclamation is being carried out under the auspices of the Government. Some two square miles are being reclaimed from the sea in Back Bay. The sea wall, which will enclose the reclamation, will ultimately be some four-and-a-half miles in length and is already well advanced, the engineers for the work being Messrs. Meik and Buchanan. When the reclamation is completed the whole area of some 1,145 acres will be brought into use as an extension of the City of Bombay.

A plan of the reclamation showing the approved lay-out, designed by the writer, is given on Plate 47. As will be seen from this, a large

area has been set aside for public buildings, legislative council, etc. ; about a hundred acres will be devoted to office premises, the offices being grouped round shady quadrangles on the lines of Gray's Inn or the colleges at Oxford.

A broad open space, lined with palm trees, under which there will be a "ride," will be laid out along the whole length of the reclamation terminating in an important public building at the extreme end of the vista, the northern end being directed on the famous clock tower built by Sir Gilbert Scott in 1865. The remainder of the area will be devoted to residential quarters which are urgently needed for the business population of Bombay. In connection with the reclamation a special quarry has been brought into use at Kandivlee, some twenty-five miles from the city, from which about 2,000 tons of stone are being delivered daily for the construction of the sea wall. When the wall is completed the interior will be filled with material dredged from the harbour.

East Colaba Reclamation

In addition to the Back Bay Reclamation an area of about 140 acres on the east side of the island is being reclaimed, and this will probably be brought into use for residential purposes before the actual completion of the larger works.

Housing Schemes

Bombay, like all other large cities, has a very acute housing problem. Not only is it customary for a whole family to live in one room, but this room frequently houses a number of other relations of the family. To meet the needs the Government are now undertaking the erection of a large number of tenement buildings to provide accommodation for 50,000 families. In view of the high price of land it has not been found practicable to provide for the poorer classes in other than blocks of tenement buildings.

Suburban Schemes

The land speculation, which has been so rife in the island proper, has extended to the suburban districts many miles out of Bombay ; and it is quite a common thing to find land which has quadrupled in value during the last ten years or so. The Government, in dealing with the problem, has taken up the matter in a comprehensive way probably unequalled in any part of the world. The Development Directorate is the first department formed in any Government in the whole of the British Empire which has as its care the development of a city and its surroundings.

For some years now, under the powers conferred by the Bombay Town Planning Act, the Government has had control of the development of a large number of areas, particularly in the vicinity of the various railway stations in the southern portion of the island of Salsette.

A power which has been particularly valuable has been that enabling the Government to pool the ownership of the various lands and to re-distribute the plots after development and construction of roads, on the lines of the well-known "Lex Adickes." The increased value of the property is shared jointly by the owner and the Government. So popular have the suburban town planning schemes become as a means of quickly earning profits that it has been necessary for the Government to take over and acquire practically the whole of the remaining area of building land within the suburban area. With a view to the proper development of this large district a suburban railway, 4 feet 8½ inch gauge and some seven or eight miles in length, has been constructed, crossing the island of Salsette in a diagonal direction and linking up with the existing railways.

Along the new route thus opened out, as well as along the existing railways and main roads, a number of settlements are springing up ; and a plan for the development of the whole region has now been prepared by the writer as Consulting Town Planner to the Government.

The accompanying illustration shows in broad lines the area of the island of Bombay which has been developed by the Port Trust on the eastern side of the island, and by the Municipality and the Improvement Trust, jointly, on the remaining part of the island. It will be seen from the plan what a vast area of suburban land has been acquired and it is possible to get some idea of the large scale on which the operations of suburban development are being carried out.

The obstacles to be overcome are considerable. A complete survey of the whole suburban area has had to be undertaken, water supply on a large scale provided ; and this, in a country such as India, is not by any means a light task. Roads are being made and a new railway line constructed. Not the least among the difficulties to be overcome has been the financing of such large operations ; and it is satisfactory to note that the Government, in disposing of land for building purposes, are able to recoup the very considerable outlay involved and at the same time provide building land at a price not more than one-quarter of the price of similar land before the introduction of the Government scheme.

The principle adopted has been to spread the whole cost of the improvements over the whole area benefited, so that in no case are fancy prices necessary or desirable.

W. R. DAVIDGE.

We are indebted to "The Builder" for the illustration on Plate 47.—Eds. T.P.R.